

Daily Readings and Reflections

Month of Mini-Retreats

Week 1

The Baptism of Our Lord Jesus

Sunday, July 1

Reading

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:13-17

Reflection

Why would the sinless Son of God want to be baptized? Jesus says it must be done "to fulfill all righteousness." But what does that mean? To answer this question, we must first remember that John the Baptist was baptizing sinners for repentance. Of course he was reluctant to baptize the Savior of the world alongside them! But it was necessary for Jesus to identify Himself with sinners to fulfill the Father's plan of salvation for the world. Many times we are reluctant to let Jesus into our lives, because, like John the Baptist, we do not feel worthy. But, like with John the Baptist, this only serves to prevent Jesus from fulfilling the role he most want to take in our lives.

Meditation

- Do I feel unworthy of having a relationship with Jesus?
- How can I remind myself daily that Jesus wants to draw near to me?
- How can I open myself up to Jesus and draw closer to Him in my daily life?

Monday, July 2

Reading:

When he has finished purging the inner sanctuary, the tent of meeting and the altar, Aaron shall bring forward the live goat. Laying both hands on its head, he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the Israelites and their trespasses, including all their sins, and so put them on the goat's head. he shall then have it led into the wilderness by an attendant. The goat will carry off all their iniquities to an isolated region.

Leviticus 16:20-22

Reflection

Under the Law of Moses, each year the sins of the people would be placed on the head of the scapegoat to be carried off into the desert. But this imperfect and temporary sacrifice was just a foreshadowing of the perfect and perpetual sacrifice to come. God's infinite love for his people would eventually provide his Son as the true and final scapegoat. Through his baptism Jesus not only identifies Himself with sinners, but he takes their sins upon Himself to fulfill his role as the last and perfect scapegoat. So often we

hold on to our sins and mistakes, and carry the burden of our own iniquities. Jesus is asking us to let Him take that burden. “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Meditation

- Do I hold on to my sins and mistakes? How does this burden affect my life?
- In what ways can I daily give my sins and shortcomings over to the One who can truly carry them away?
- How could letting go of my sins and finding rest in Jesus affect my life and the relationships I have with those around me?

Tuesday, July 3

Reading

He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.

1 Peter 2:24

For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says:

“In an acceptable time I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you.”

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - 6:2

Reflection

In his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope Saint John Paul II says, “The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became “sin” for our sake (cf. *2Cor* 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. *Mt* 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out.” So we have now gone from Jesus identifying with sinners to taking on their sin to actually becoming sin. The Perfect and Holy One became sin! And why? Because of his love for us! So that we might “live for righteousness” and “become the righteousness of God.” In the days to come we will explore how our own baptism prepares and equips us to live for and become righteousness. For now, let’s meditate on the mystery of Jesus’ baptism.

Meditation

Through his baptism, Jesus reveals that God’s love for you is so great that he would send his Son to become sin so that you could become righteousness. Spend a few moments in silence meditating on this mystery.

Wednesday, July 4

Reading

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God...Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and since we have “a great priest over the house of God,” let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy.

Hebrews 9:11-14,10:19-23

Reflection

Our baptism connects us to Jesus and his baptism in a very powerful way. When we enter the baptismal waters we are entering a mystery outside of time and space that joins us to Jesus and his baptism. In his baptism he identifies Himself with us, enabling us to become part of his body. In our baptism we become part of the Body of Christ. In his baptism he takes upon Himself our sins and becomes our unblemished and eternal spiritual scapegoat. In our baptism we are washed clean, not only in the flesh, but in the spirit. In his baptism he begins the mission he is given by the Father to be both the sacrifice that opens Heaven for us and the High Priest who intercedes for us in Heaven. The spiritual cleansing of our baptism allows us to approach God with confidence. Jesus gives us back the relationship with God that the sin of Adam destroyed. And now we have the promise that if we draw near to God, then he will draw near to us.

Meditation

- How can I allow the gifts of my baptism (forgiveness, unity with the Body of Christ, the ability to approach God) to help me draw closer to God?
- How can I use the gifts and promises of my baptism to help me find hope and increase my trust in God each day?

Thursday, July 5

Reading

Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

But you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

Reflection

Through our baptism we are not only made members of the Body of Christ, but we also become sharers in his mission. It is through us, the baptized, that the Good News is spread. It is our act of thanksgiving for the great things God has done for us. The deeper our relationship with God becomes, the more we will desire to go forth and announce his praises. The closer we draw to God, the more clearly we are able to see the abundant blessing he pours out on us. And will be able to join Mary in saying, "*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,*" and, "*The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*" (Luke 1:46,49)

Meditation

- How can I make time to recognize God blessings each day?
- How can I share my encounters with Jesus and the blessing I have received with the people around me?
- How can I take my place in fulfilling the mission of Jesus and his Church?

Friday, July 6

Reading

Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call."

Acts 2:38-39

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Reflection

Because Jesus loves us, he did not leave us alone to continue his mission. Just as through his baptism Jesus was equipped for his mission, so too in our baptism he equips us. He gives us the Holy Spirit in baptism (and more fully in Confirmation) to equip and guide us. Through the Holy Spirit we are each given gifts to strengthen us, to help us fulfill the mission given to us, and to build up the Body of Christ. Because of this, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be shared for the benefit of others. What a great and loving God we have! He not only sends his Son so that we might have life, but he places his Spirit within us so that we may share love and life of Christ with those around us.

Meditation

- How can I allow the Holy Spirit to lead me into a deeper relationship with God?
- How have I seen and felt the Holy Spirit working in and through me in my life and the lives of others?
- How can I use my God-given gifts to help others know who Jesus is?

Saturday, July 7

Reading

John answered and said, "No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete. He must increase; I must decrease."

John 3:27-30

As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:24-27

Reflection

"The theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist. The Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom." The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him." (CCC 796) How do we, the faithful members of Jesus' Body, enter into this betrothal with Jesus? Baptism, of course! Our baptism is the nuptial bath that cleanses us so that we may be presented to Jesus as a spotless bride and become one with him. Through our baptism we enter into the great love affair between God and his people! A love so deep and so intimate that he would sacrifice everything to ensure that his bride would be united to him eternally.

Meditation

The Almighty Creator of the Universe desires a relationship with you so much that he would sacrifice his only Son to ensure that you could be united to him, not only in this life, but forever. Spend a few minutes meditating on the mystery of God's great love for you.